Dear Lam —

I return you notes as you request — with many thanks for their use —

I have never been able to assent to the proposition that the holding of slaves always involved guilt in the holder i.e that slaveholding is a sin under all circumstances. If you define "Slaveholding" so as to include the motive, & make that motive a bad one, of course I should agree with you that it always is a sin. — But I suppose when we denounce slaveholding as being always sinful we are understood to refer merely to the outward relation. I say that the mere outward relation always involves & produces moral evil, but not always implies guilt. If however you give sin the broad meaning of all violation of divine laws, whether voluntary or involuntary, conscious or unconscious, then slaveholding is always a sin.

truly yours

James F. Clarke

Slaveholding a violation of ye law of God, always.

{ always liable to hold a man as an property.

Man stealing forbidden we'd be no stealing, if there were no holding & owning, of men as property. "Receiver as bad as ye thief!"

Slaveholding [illegible] category with [illegible] adultery. It is [illegible] violation of God's laws. "It is in ye same sense a sin under all circumstances ye these are.

Can a man inflict these on another without consciousness of wrong. [John Randolph's, Remorse.]

To

Rev Samuel May
on Slaveholding, Leicester
there must be sin somewhere
Mass
Care of Sam. May Esq —
corner of State & Broad Sts.
Boston

Can one say ye anything is a sin under all circumstances?
Is Murder a Sin under all circumstances? Is Theft?
Is adultery? One may say No, perhaps, if we we'd split hairs, & suppose ye case of an idiot committing them — or even one in moral darkness

I therefore contend ye in a fair construction of ye words, Slaveholding is always a sin — i.e. it is always a violation of God's laws, and, whenever its nature understood, must always be charged as a sin —

I take ye position ye no man is compelled to be a Slaveholder, i.e. an owner of his fellow-men.

If a man finds himself so circumstanced as not to be able to emancipate his Slaves, under existing laws, he can at least do 2 things.

1. acquaint them ye he does not claim them as his property,

2. Execute papers of manumission, by wh they will be freed in case of his death

MSS.B.L.6 v.13, p.55